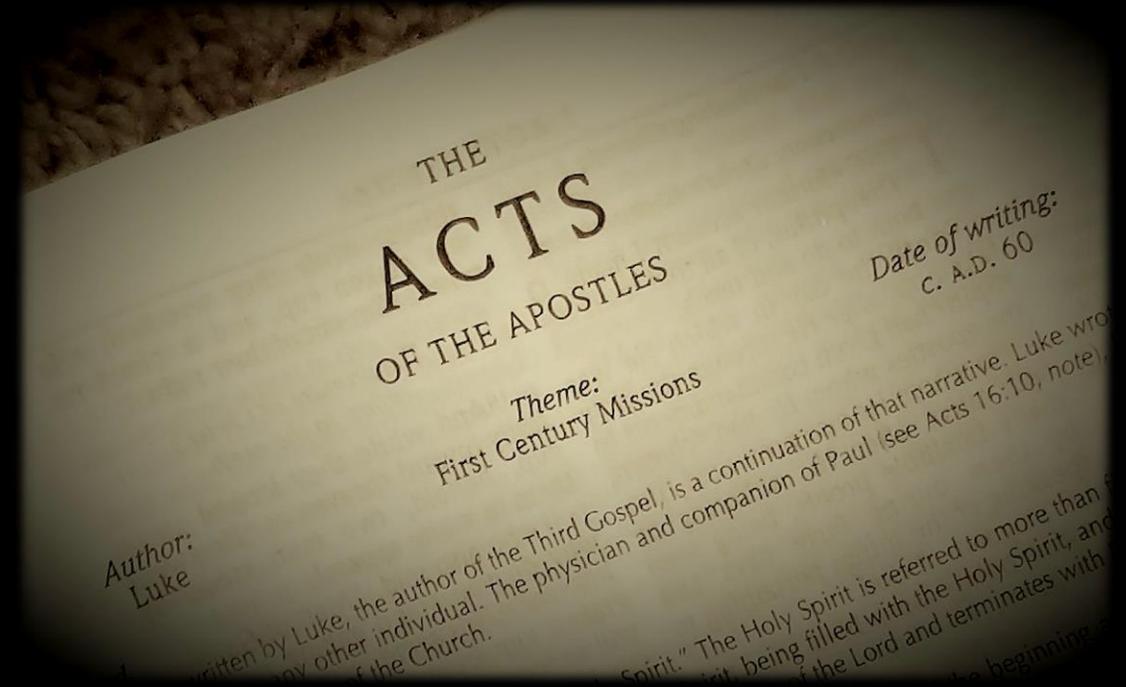


Verse by Verse

Acts 8



Previously in *Acts*

Previously in Acts

- Last week heard **Stephen's** message before the Sanhedrin and saw the Sanhedrin's response.
- After Stephen gave a clear presentation of the Gospel, they flew into a rage and **killed him by stoning.**
- We were also introduced to **a young man named Saul.**

Acts 8 Introduction

Acts 8 Introduction

- This chapter begins after the death of **Stephen** with **Saul** as a persecutor of the church.
- It goes on to describe the ministry of another one of **the Seven** – a man named **Philip**.

Acts 8 Key Verse

Acts 8 Key Verse

- Acts 8:4 (ESV)

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

Acts 8 Outline

Acts 8 Outline

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3
2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8
3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25
4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3

- 8:1-2 So Stephen was just the beginning.
- It seems there was a wider persecution, but mainly associated with the Hellenistic believers.

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3

- 8:3 Saul, we learn in the next chapter (9:11), was from Tarsus, in Cilicia – or eastern Turkey today.
- He was from the Greek-speaking world and may have been close to the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem.

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3



The apostles were presumably left alone; the fact that they could stay on in Jerusalem (no doubt along with other Christians) confirms the suspicion that it was mainly Stephen's group which was being attacked.

*– I. Howard Marshall (1934 – 2015),
University of Aberdeen, Scotland*

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3

- Throughout **Acts**, the church in Jerusalem will remain strong.
- Not surprisingly, it will be dominated by **a very Jewish Christianity**.
- **James the brother of Jesus** became its most prominent leader.
- He will later die for his faith, but that is not in **Acts**.

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3

- The Bible sees a deep connection between suffering and faith. For example, we have this from Paul (Saul).
- **Romans 5:1-5** (ESV)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God ...

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3

- The Bible sees a deep connection between suffering and faith. For example, we have this from Paul (Saul).
- **Romans 5:1-5** (ESV)

... ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:4 This is our key verse.
- Let's read it a couple of times.

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:4 The devil overplayed his hand.
- When the church was attacked, those scattered Christians took their faith with them to other places.
- In the end, the Gospel spread and the church multiplied.

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8



*Kill us, torture us, condemn us,
grind us to the dust.... The more
you mow us down the more we
grow, the seed is the blood of
Christians.*

*– Tertullian (ca 160 – 225 AD),
North African Church Father*

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:5-8 the city [or “a city”] of Samaria.
- Perhaps the modern Arab city of Nablus in the West Bank.
- (Ancient Shechem)
- About 31 miles N of Jerusalem



2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:5-8 Philip's ministry was very much like Stephen's including signs (miracles) and casting out demons.
- His primary purpose, however, is in v.5.
- He proclaimed to them the Christ.

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:5-8 The Samaritans were half-breeds and heretics as far as most Jews of that day were concerned.
- The rivalry started when the 10 northern tribes rebelled against Rehoboam son of Solomon.
- Their king Jeroboam led them straight into idolatry.
- It got worse when the Assyrians took many off into captivity and settled pagan foreigners in the land.

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:5-8 It got worse again when the Jews returned from captivity.
- The Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (See Ezra and Nehemiah).
- By Philip's time this rivalry – both ethnic and religious – had been going on for 1000 years!

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- 8:5-8 But the Samaritans still held onto the five books of the Law – or Torah.
- And they believed in a *Taheb* – their version of the Messiah – who was to come.

2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8

- John 4:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ The [Samaritan] woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

- Philip, Peter and John were all following the example of Jesus in sharing Christ with the Samaritans.

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

- There are two big issues here worth considering.
 1. The apparent two-part reception of the Spirit.
 2. The question as to whether Simon really believed.

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

- Romans 8:9 (ESV)

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

- Romans 12:13 (ESV)

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—
Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to
drink of one Spirit.

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

Today, when a person trusts in Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit at that moment. But this Holy Spirit activity in the book of Acts represented a unique moment in the early church. As each new group came to believe the gospel ...

*– Tony Evans,
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

... (Samaritans, Gentiles, etc.), they received the Holy Spirit when the apostles were present. This demonstrated the unity of the believers and that all were embracing the same faith.

*– Tony Evans,
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

- Ephesians 5:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

- Now as to whether Simon truly believed.
- Let's reread 8:13.
- Now what about 8:20-23?

3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25

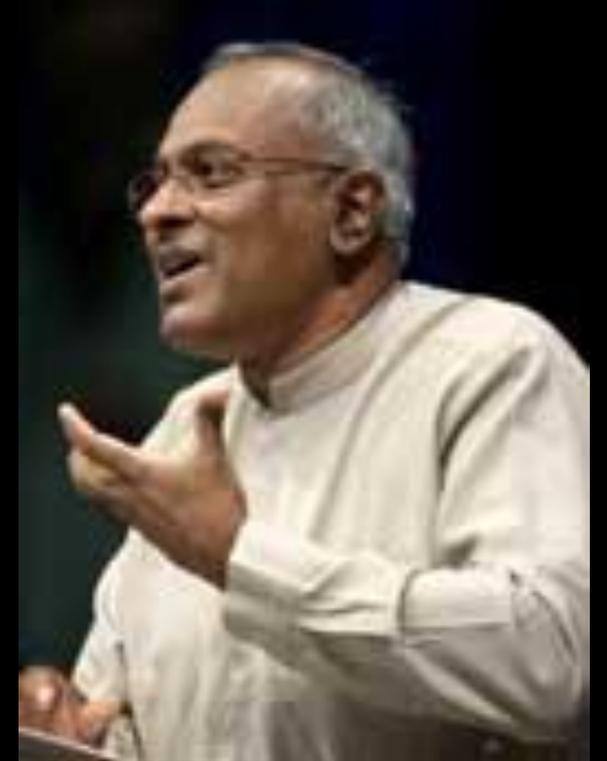
- My personal conclusion is that I'm simply not sure about Simon's faith – maybe it was real, maybe not.
- Two things that we know are true:
 1. Genuine believers can fall into terrible sin and need to repent of it.
 2. The devil's children can look a lot like genuine believers.

4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

This story shows how important personal evangelism is, insofar as a key preacher in the church is taken on a long journey in order to share the gospel with just one person ...

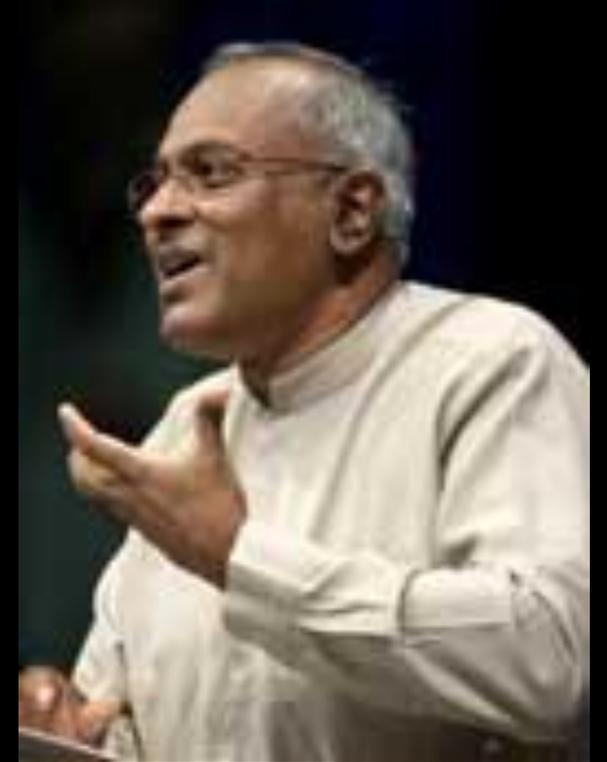
*– Ajith Fernando,
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

... And note that the episode is given the same amount of space as the record of the conversion of large numbers in Samaria.

*– Ajith Fernando,
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

- If we learn nothing else, let's remember that **personal evangelism is important** to the life of the church.
 1. Sometimes is it truly simple obedience. (v.26)
 2. Often it needs to be across cultures.
 3. People may have questions related to Jesus (v.34)
 4. God is always at work somewhere preparing hearts.
 5. Keep it scriptural and keep it about Christ.

4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

- Acts 21:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. ⁸ On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, [see v.40] and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist [a perfect name for him!] who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

Acts 8 What We Just Read

Acts 8 What We Just Read

1. Persecution by Saul 8:1-3
2. Philip in Samaria 8:4-8
3. Simon the Magician 8:9-25
4. The Ethiopian Eunuch 8:26-40

Acts 8 Key Verse

Acts 8 Key Verse

- Acts 8:4 (ESV)

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

Acts 8 Key Points

Acts 8 Key Points

1. A Christian understanding of suffering is necessary to a fully formed faith.
2. The gospel is for everyone, including Samaritans and high officials of Ethiopia. (Who is very unlike you?)
3. Simon reminds us that it is really hard to know a person's heart – but that is between them and God.
4. Let's not neglect the highly valuable practice of personal evangelism – so vital to church life.

Acts 8 A Prayer

Acts 8 A Prayer

- Our Father in heaven,
- Thank you for the lessons we can learn from your word this day. Through them please help us to grow.
- Help us to have a completely Christian and biblical understanding of suffering, since we live in a world that likes to avoid pain and difficulty at all costs.
- Help us also to look at people as those whom you love and who desperately need you just as we do.

Acts 8 A Prayer

- We may never know others' hearts, and may not be able to tell if they truly believe.
- Still, we know that each of us has to stand before you and answer for our sin and the reality of our faith.
- With all of this in mind, please make us more faithful and more effective in sharing our faith.
- In Christ,
- Amen

Acts 8 References

1. Evans, Tony; CSB Bibles by Holman. *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*. B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
2. Fernando, A. (1998). *Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
3. Marshall, I. H. (1980). *Acts: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 5). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
4. Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (New American Bible Commentary, Vol. 26). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
5. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Acts: the Spirit, the church & the world*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.